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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY China

SUBJECT Land Rentals and Land Redistribution, Ko Keng (Chungshan)
Class Struggle/Taxation and Forced Sales to Government/
Shortages of Commodities/Travel Permits

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1. The village of Ko Keng is a small farming town of 40 or 50 families. It has never had any industry or trade. It is about 15 miles from the market town of Sha Chi (沙溪; Cantonese Saikai), where the farmers from Ko Keng went to sell their produce and make their household purchases. In Sha Chi is a small steam electric plant using rice husks and sugar cane refuse for fuel which supplied power to a rice mill, a peanut oil refinery, and a sugar mill, all of them small plants. [redacted] the rice mill was still operating, but shortly after [redacted] the sugar mill and peanut oil mills closed for lack of supplies. [redacted] peanut oil had practically disappeared in Kwangtung. It had been replaced by a dark-colored oil [redacted]
50X1-HUM
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2. When the Communists came to the area their first reform was the adjustment of farm rentals [share cropping] paid by tenants. The customary rental had been half of the crop to the landlord. About six months after the Communists took charge they reduced the rentals by 25%, and after another six months by a further 12 1/2% of the original amount, so that the tenants were then paying 31 1/4% of the crop to the landlord [52 1/2% of 50%]. On each occasion when the reductions were made the landlord was required to refund to the tenant the amount collected for three years back in excess of the new scale.
3. [redacted] the Communists expropriated all landlord-owned farm land and divided it among the residents of the village. Theoretically the apportionment of the land was carried out by the Farmers' Association, which was made up of local
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50X1-HUM

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- 2 -

residents, but in fact the division was made by cadres sent for the purpose by higher authority. [redacted]

50X1-HUM

The amount of land anyone received depended in part on the number of members in the family and in part on the quality of the ground. The original owners were usually allowed to keep a small plot of inferior ground for subsistence farming.

4. The redistribution of land was followed [redacted] by the class "struggle" [redacted] Toucheng/, during which all property of the landlords was seized by other residents. No one was killed in the struggle in Ko Keng but in neighboring villages several landlords were killed and many others committed suicide. 50X1-HUM
5. The redistribution of land applied to farming land. The house properties of landlords were seized during the struggle, but exceptions were made in the cases of the families of overseas Chinese if the heads of the families were still abroad. In such cases they were allowed to keep their house property. If the head of the family had returned and was living in the house, it was treated as other landlord property and seized. The exception in favor of a non-resident owner was certainly made in the hope of his family continuing to receive remittances from him.
6. The taxes paid by the farmers [redacted] were 15% of each crop. Two crops a year were harvested. 50X1-HUM
7. After [redacted] farmers were allowed to retain, after the payment of taxes, 30 catties of rice per month per person for their own consumption. The remainder they were required to sell to the government. If a farmer required more than the allowed ration, he had to buy it back at an increased price. 50X1-HUM
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[redacted] There were no granaries in the village. 50X1-HUM
8. Other than the shortage of cooking oil, there was no shortage of food in Ko Keng [redacted] It was even possible to buy pork, but no one dared to do so openly as it would have disclosed that the purchaser had cash in hand. Food was somewhat easier to get in Canton than in Ko Keng. The prices were about the same. Rice cost JMP\$1400 per catty in Canton [redacted]. Exchange at that time was approximately JMP\$ 4,200 equal Hong Kong \$1, so that rice cost about HK\$0.30 per catty. 50X1-HUM
9. Kerosine oil [for lighting] was obtainable, but was of poor quality. It was discolored (yellowish) and smoked badly. [redacted] 50X1-HUM
10. Life in the village was completely dead [redacted] A former tenant would not speak to a former landlord lest he be reported for fraternizing. In fact, no two people would hold a conversation in the presence of a third. Mahjong and other games were prohibited and feasts [dinner parties] were taboo. Everyone went to bed at dark and spent the daylight hours working in the fields growing food for their own consumption. 50X1-HUM

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